

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Western Range Command Transmit Site

Vandenberg Air Force Base, California

Pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S. Code 4321 *et seq.*, implementing Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508, and 32 CFR Part 989, *Environmental Impact Analysis Process* (EIAP), the U.S. Air Force (Air Force) conducted an assessment of the potential environmental consequences of constructing a new Missile Flight Termination Ground System (MFTGS) dock facility that will serve as the Western Range (WR) Command Transmit (CT) site on Vandenberg Air Force Base (AFB), California.

Vandenberg AFB is headquarters to the 30th Space Wing, the Air Force Space Command unit that operates Vandenberg AFB and the Western Range. Vandenberg AFB operates as a missile test base and aerospace center, supporting west coast space launch activities for the Air Force, Department of Defense, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and commercial contractors.

Vandenberg AFB is located on the south-central coast of California, approximately halfway between San Diego and San Francisco. The 99,100-acre base extends along approximately 35 miles of the Santa Barbara County coastline.

The MFTGS is a Range Safety Critical System used to transmit radio carrier and frequency-modulated radio messages to launch vehicles that will cause the onboard receiver/decoders to activate flight termination functions in the event of an anomaly. MFTGS primary support facilities must meet line-of-site (LOS) requirements for active launch pads. Backup primary support is required whenever a primary site is taken out of commission to undergo improvements or repairs. MFTGS primary and backup support for Space Launch Complex (SLC) -3 and SLC-6 is presently not available. An MFTGS primary and backup support facility for these two launch complexes is needed in support of the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) program.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) (incorporated as an attachment to this finding) considered all potential impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, both as a solitary action and potentially in conjunction with other similar projects. The EA summarizes the results of the evaluations of the proposed action and alternatives. It analyzes activities that have the potential to affect both the natural and human environment. This analysis summarizes the options evaluated and provides information explaining the need for the Proposed Action and its effect on human and natural resources.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is to construct and operate a docking facility for two command transmitters that would provide LOS coverage to all launch facilities within Vandenberg AFB. The site selected for the facility is a three-acre parcel located approximately 250 feet west of 13th Street and 1,740 feet south of Watt Road, on north Vandenberg AFB. The proposed facility would entail:

- Installation of concrete/asphalt foundation to accommodate the two command transmitters, omni-antennas, directional antennas, generator buildings, communications center and an office/maintenance building.
- Installation of two command transmitter units, four omni-antennas (100 feet high) and four directional antennas (31 feet high).

- Installation of two generators and fuel storage tanks within two mobile buildings.
- Installation of a portable unit to serve as office/maintenance building.
- Installation of a 1,000 gallon capacity underground septic system.
- Installation of a 250-foot access road connecting the facility to 13th Street.

The following utilities would be required:

- Installation of a 250-foot underground water pipeline, a 1,200-foot overhead electrical power line on existing power poles, and approximately 3,600 feet of parallel underground fiber optic communications lines.

Construction of the proposed facility would occur over a 10-month period. After completion of construction, an estimated one to two personnel would man the facility eight hours per day, five days per week, 52 weeks per year. During launches, an additional two to four personnel would be present at the facility for approximately eight hours. At the present time, approximately 18 launches per year are planned.

Implementation of the No-Action Alternative would preclude meeting LOS backup and primary-support requirements for EELV program launch facilities at Vandenberg AFB. A decision to not construct the new WR CT site could result in the EELV program missing critical program objectives.

Alternative C would incorporate the same components as those of the Proposed Action but the location of the site would be approximately 240 feet north of the Proposed Action. However, this proposed location would result in a longer fiber optic cable route and would be within the caution hazard corridor of future launches from a facility northeast of Watt Road.

All other sites considered for location of the proposed WR CT site that would meet LOS coverage for all launch complexes on Vandenberg AFB were eliminated from further analysis due to conflicts with explosive safety zones, launch hazard zones, radio frequency radiation hazards and airfield clearance requirements.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The analyses of the affected environment and environmental consequences of implementing the Proposed Action and Alternative C presented in the EA concluded that no adverse effects should result to Cultural Resources (Section 4.2), Air Quality (Section 4.3), Water Resources (Section 4.4), Earth Resources (Section 4.5), Hazardous Materials and Waste Management (Section 4.6), Land Use and Aesthetics (Section 4.7), Utilities (Section 4.8), and Human Health and Safety (Section 4.9). All measures described in the EA (Section 2.1.9) will be implemented to ensure adverse impacts are precluded. No cumulative adverse impacts will result from activities associated with construction of the WR CT site, when considered in conjunction with recent past and future projects within the project area (Section 4.10).

Three areas of environmental consequences evaluated in the EA were determined to have the potential to result in minor impacts.

a) Biological Resources

Approximately three acres of low quality Central Coastal Scrub would be lost for construction of the facility. One federally and state endangered plant species, Gaviota tarplant (*Deinandra increscens* ssp. *villosa*), and one federal plant species of special concern, Kellogg's horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *sericea*), were documented as occurring within the Area of Potential Effects. Specimens of Gaviota tarplant documented during pre-construction surveys will be isolated and

avoided during construction activities. Avoidance and protection measures as described in Section 2.1.9.1 would be implemented for Kellogg's horkelia. No significant impacts are anticipated (see EA Sections 3.1 and 4.1).

The project would result in minor adverse impacts to wildlife due to the permanent loss of low-value wildlife habitat as well as low quality habitat for special status avian species. Pre-construction surveys and monitoring as described in Section 2.1.9.1 would minimize any potential adverse impacts to wildlife species resulting from disturbances associated with construction activities and operation of the facility. No significant impacts are anticipated (see EA Sections 3.1 and 4.1).

b) Air Quality

Mobile source emissions would temporarily increase during construction, but would not exceed regulatory standards. No significant impacts are anticipated (see EA Sections 3.3 and 4.3). All measures described in the EA (Section 2.1.9.3) will be implemented to further decrease emissions during construction. During operations, the stand-by generators would comply with the Stationary Diesel Airborne Toxic Control Measure. In addition, new regulations and requirements as of January 1, 2005 for new diesel engines would be reviewed and an Air Pollution Control District Permit would be obtained if required prior to their installation. An Air Conformity Analysis completed under 40 CFR 93.153(b), (c), and section 176(c)(4) of the Clean Air Act, deemed the Proposed Action *de minimis* and exempt from further conformity requirements.

c) Water Quality

Because the project would disturb an area greater than one acre, a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit would be required to protect water resources. The NPDES Permit requires the development and implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan that includes preventative maintenance measures for construction equipment, spill prevention and response measures, sediment and soil erosion control measures, and identifies measures for management of runoff.

d) Land Use and Aesthetics

The Air Force will coordinate the Proposed Action with the California Coastal Commission in compliance with the Coastal Zone Management Act.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon our review of the facts and analyses contained in the attached EA, conducted in accordance with the provisions of NEPA, the CEQ Regulations, AFI 32-7061, as amended by the interim change dated March 12, 2003, which adopted 32 CFR Part 989, we conclude that the Proposed Action should not have a significant environmental impact, either by itself or cumulatively with other ongoing projects at Vandenberg AFB. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The signing of this Finding of No Significant Impact completes the Environmental Impact Analysis Process.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
CONCURRENCE PAGE**

Environmental Assessment for the Western Range Command Transmit Site
Vandenberg Air Force Base, California

I concur with the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Environmental Protection Committee Approval:



FRANK GALLEGOS, Colonel, USAF
Commander, 30th Space Wing
Chairman, Environmental Protection Committee
Vandenberg AFB, CA

22 Feb 05
Date

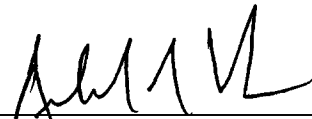
Judge Advocate Approval:



RAYMOND F. CHAMBERLAND, Lt Col, USAF
Staff Judge Advocate
Vandenberg AFB, CA

11 Feb 05
Date

Squadron Approval:



RICHARD N. COTE, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer
Vandenberg AFB, CA

1 Feb 05
Date